

May 12, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Melissa Martin, and I am submitting testimony today on behalf of the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MECASA), the organization which represents and serves Maine's sexual violence prevention and response programs as well as Maine's Children's Advocacy Centers. MECASA initiates and advocates for victim-centered public policy; provides expert training, technical assistance, and resources for providers and partners; and funds the service providers in your communities.

MECASA is here today in support of LD 1944, An Act to Protect Children and Adults from Technology-facilitated Sexual Abuse. Thank you to Representative Kuhn for sponsoring this legislation.

This bill does two things—update the definition of private images and other references to image-based sexual harm in Maine criminal law to include AI or “deep fake” images and expand image-based protections in civil protection orders. I want to explain the status of the current law and why each of these updates is vitally important to keep Maine up to date in the changing world of online image-based sexual violence. My testimony will focus mainly on the private images law.

Currently in Maine, we have a criminal and civil law about disseminating private or sexual images of another person without their consent. The criminal law allows someone to be prosecuted when they share another person's private images without their consent. The civil law allows the survivor of this type of abuse to seek and receive a civil protection order. This protection order can require the other person to destroy and/or not further share these images.

However, our current Maine law does not clearly include images that are modified or created by AI or other means. These types of images are increasingly being created and used to harass, torment, and embarrass their victims. People who share these images no longer need to get a private image of a person; they can simply create one using technology. The federal government

has been trying to address this abuse in a variety of ways,¹ but we also have tools at our disposal in Maine.

First, we can update the definition of private images in the Maine Criminal Code to include these AI generated or deepfake images. Second, we can allow a survivor of image-based abuse to seek a protection order to prevent the sharing of images when it is threatened or when images are shared beyond what was consented to (e.g., when a survivor consents to a friend seeing an image but not to it being posted on social media). This bill makes these important updates to civil and criminal law and supports survivors of online abuse and harassment in Maine.

These changes are important because even if the image is not “real” it can still create harm both for the person or people whose image was used to create the generated image and the target. AI images are often a composite image taken from many other children or adults, many of whom likely could not or did not consent to having their image used in this way. And for the target of the abuse, these images are often so realistic that most people viewing them will assume the image is of the target, creating the same harm as an “actual” image.

For these reasons, we support the bill. Thank you for your consideration. We hope you will support LD 1944 and would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.

About Maine’s Sexual Assault Service Providers

One in five Mainers will experience sexual assault at some point in their lifetime.² Each year, 14,000 Mainers will experience sexual violence.³

Maine’s sexual violence service providers provide free and confidential services across the state to victims/survivors of sexual harassment and sexual assault and those close to them, as well as to individuals who wish to increase their understanding of the issues. Just some of the services include a 24-hour statewide sexual assault helpline, crisis intervention and information, support groups, in-person accompaniment and advocacy through the medical and legal systems, and school- and community-based prevention education. Services are provided for a victim/survivor regardless of when they experienced sexual violence, and regardless of what type of sexual

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/gpc/briefing-room/2024/05/23/a-call-to-action-to-combat-image-based-sexual-abuse/>

² Dumont, R. & Shaler, G. (2015). *Maine Crime Victimization Report: Informing public policy for safer communities*. Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine.

³ *Ibid.*

violence they experienced. Types of sexual violence include, but are not limited to, sexual harassment and gender-based bullying, child sexual abuse, elder sexual abuse, stalking, sex trafficking, and sexual violence within an intimate partner relationship.

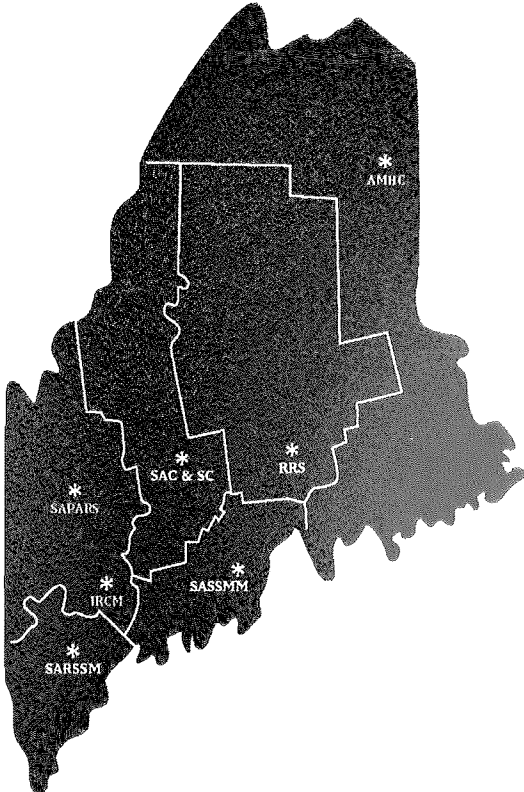
24/7 Confidential

Maine Sexual Assault Helpline: 1-800-871-7741

mecasa

**MAINE COALITION AGAINST
SEXUAL ASSAULT**

info@mecasa.org | mecasa.org
207-626-0034



**STATEWIDE
SEXUAL ASSAULT HELPLINE
1-800-871-7741**

Free. Private. 24/7.

MAINE'S SEXUAL ASSAULT SUPPORT CENTERS

AMHC Sexual Assault Services (AMHC)

Serving Aroostook, Hancock, & Washington Counties •
amhcsexualassaultservices.org

Immigrant Resource Center of Maine

Serving Androscoggin & Cumberland Counties • ircofmaine.org

Rape Response Services (RRS)

Serving Penobscot & Piscataquis Counties • rrsonline.org

Sexual Assault Prevention & Response Services (SAPARS)

Serving Androscoggin, Oxford & Franklin Counties and the towns of
Bridgton & Harrison • sapars.org

Sexual Assault Crisis & Support Center (SAC & SC)

Serving Kennebec & Somerset Counties • silentnomore.org

Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine (SARSSM)

Serving Cumberland & York Counties • sarsonline.org

Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine (SASSMM)

Serving Eastern Cumberland, Sagadahoc, Knox, Waldo & Lincoln
Counties • sassmm.org

MORE SEXUAL VIOLENCE SERVICES

Maine TransNet • mainetrans.net • info@mainetransnet.org

Wabanaki Women's Coalition • wabanakiwomenscoalition.org
207-763-3478

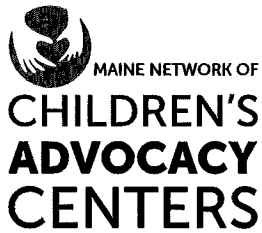
Aroostook Band of Micmacs, Domestic & Sexual Violence
Advocacy Center • 207-551-3639

Houlton Band of Maliseets, Domestic & Sexual Violence
Advocacy Center • 207-532-6401

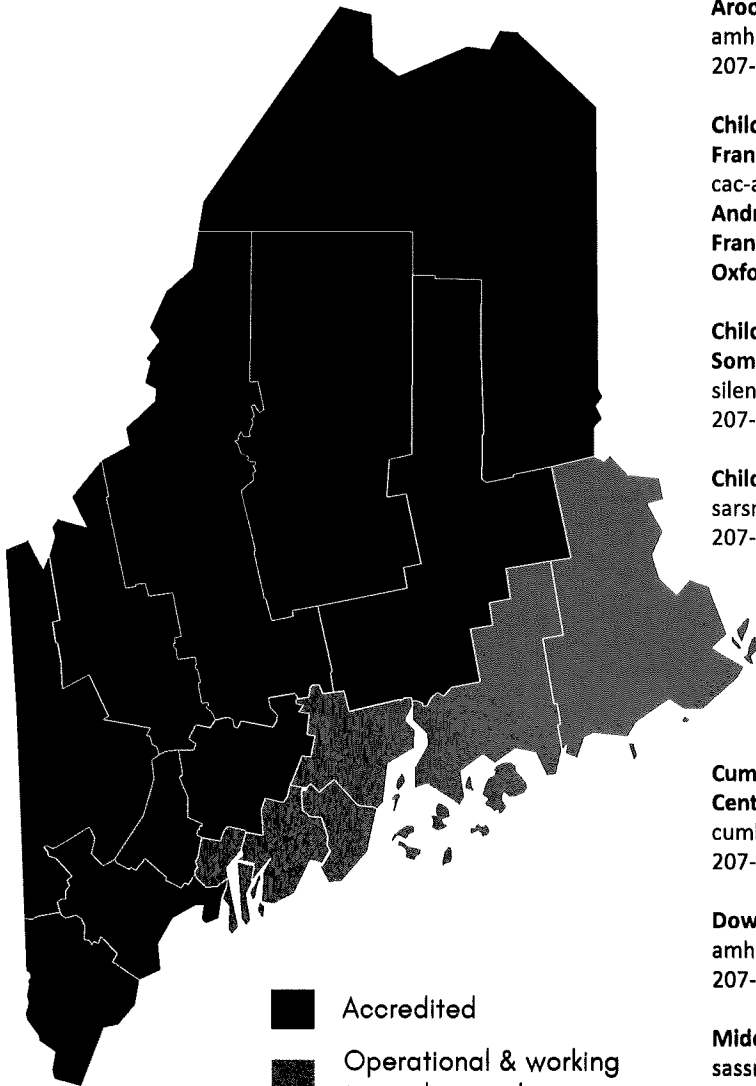
Indian Township Passamaquoddy, Domestic & Sexual
Violence Advocacy Center • 207-214-1917

Passamaquoddy Peaceful Relations • 1-877-853-2613

Penobscot Indian Nation, Domestic & Sexual Violence
Advocacy Center • 207-631-4886



Maine's Children's Advocacy Centers



Aroostook County Children's Advocacy Center
amhcsas.org
207-472-6134

**Children's Advocacy Center of Androscoggin,
Franklin, and Oxford Counties**
cac-afco.org
Androscoggin: 207-784-0436
Franklin: 207-778-9777
Oxford: 207-739-1228

**Children's Advocacy Center of Kennebec &
Somerset Counties**
silentnomore.org/about-our-cac
207-861-4491

Children's Advocacy Center of York County
sarsmm.org
207-459-2380

**Cumberland County Children's Advocacy
Center**
cumberlandcountycac.org
207-879-6160

Downeast Children's Advocacy Center
amhcsas.org
207-255-3687

Midcoast Children's Advocacy Center
sassmm.org
207-522-7162

Penquis Children's Advocacy Center
penquiscac.org
207-974-2469